CBS news file - not on 4 a.m. news

Managing editor
Commercial-Appeal
Memphis, Tenn.

3/21/93

Dear editor,

The CBS radio hourly news at 1 a.m. referred to your reporting of Army intelligence's spying on blacks beginning circa World War I, including the use of U-2s and extending to the spying by eight Green ~~Berxx~~ Berets on Martin Luther King, Jr., in Memphis at the time he was assassinated there. (Sorry, I'm almost 80, unwell, and my typing can't be any better.) If you have any interest in other domestic intelligence activities aimed at Memphians you are welcome to what I've obtained and I think I can tell you how to go much farthur than I was able to. It was remarkably extensive. It included operations against whites who sought to help blacks and retaliation against the relatives of young blacks the FBI did not like.

Dr. Gerald McKnight, professor of history at local Hood College, who has duplicates of two files of Memphis domestic intelligence I obtained by FOIA today is more familiar with them than I now am. He wrote ~~to~~ two fine and little-known scholarly articles on them for the South Atlantic quarterly.

Probably the reporters who knew me when I was James Earl Ray's investigator in his evidentiary hearing before Judge MacRae are no longer on your staff. I did the investigating for his habeas corpus action, which succeeded, and ~~in~~ for that evidentiary hearing. I became his investigator after the 1971 publication of my book Frame-Up. It is now being reprinted as a quality paperback by Carroll & Graf.

After that hearing as one of about a dozen FOIA lawsuits, I filed C.A.75-1996 in federal district court in Washington. Among about 60,000 pages of records obtained in that litigation are the FBI's Memphis and headquarters files on the sanitation strike and on the group of young blacks who called themselves The Invaders. These are domestic intelligence files. The domestic spying extended into Congressional campaigns and the sessions of the city council. The duplicate filings listed sometimes totalled a page, to indicate the extent of this spying on Memphians. A considerable volume of these records were given the several military intelligence components.

I would like very much to have a copy of whatever you published that the CBS newscast referred to and of the records you obtained for archival purposes, to include with my own that will ultimately be part of a free public archive at Hood College. When I am no longer able to make these records available to others, some 60 file cabinets of them and innumerable ~~xxxxxx~~ boxes will be at Hood. The total is of about a third of a million once-secret government records. Of these about a quarter of a million relate to the JFK assassination and its investigations. Most of the other records relate to the King assassination. Included in these are quite a few copies of Memphis police domestic-intelligence records of the files I believe it destroyed of which it gave copies to the

FBI. Where the FBI destroyed some of those files its records reflect where the information in them is contained in other files not destroyed.

Most of these records are FBI records. Of them the greatest volume is its MURKIN files of headquarters and about a half-dozen field offices in addition to those of Memphis, its "office of origin."

The title of the Carroll & Graf reprint is Martin Luther King: the Assassination.

If you are not willing to provide copies of what you obtained via FOIA, I'd appreciate the information I'd need to duplicate the request under which you obtained them.

While I cannot speak for the college I believe these records would all be identified to users of the future as provided by your paper. I would keep them separate from the others I have, with this identification, provided by the Commercial-Appeal.

The extent of the domestic intelligence operations in Memphis reflected by the records I obtained on only two subjects surprised me very much. I believe they also surprised Dr. McKnight. It was not limited to Memphis. From the FBI's St. Louis office the file on just one of its "symbol informants" gave the Post-Dispatch four page-one stories it syndicated.

A "symbol informant" is one whose hiring has been approved by FBI headquarters and who is identified by a symbol in any records distributed even within the FBI.

The Memphis FBI even borrowed some of other offices to use in Memphis. Its spying included the King funeral and the use of clandestine means to learn who would be there from cities other than Atlanta and Memphis.

If the records you obtained and wrote about are like those I am familiar with you have done a fine public service in informing the people. FOIA, if you are not familiar with its history, has the purpose of letting the people know what their government does.

You were able to obtain these records because in 1974 the Congress amended the investigatory files exemption to open such records under FOIA, with one of my earlier lawsuits cited as requiring that amendment.

Thank you very much for what you have done and for anything you will be able to let me have. I intend no writing on it but in the future I believe others would write about it, crediting your paper.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg

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P.S. When I was interviewed on the King assassination by the TV program Unsolved Mysteries, to be aired Wednesday, March 31, they photographed part of my files. It will give you an idea of their extent because it was only partial.